



Also working on uMshado was Vuyisa Ngqawani, who is doing a B Tech in graphic design at NMMU. Photos: Sue MacLennan



Rat Western, lecturer in the Fine Arts Department at Rhodes University, volunteered her services as a designer.



Fourth-year Writing and Editing student from Rhodes was Carol Kagezi, right - one of the team that has been producing the fresh new Makana Sharp for the past few months. Clever Pig was the book for which she was editor and Lee-Anne Knowles was the designer.



Siyasanga Madyibi, from the Nelson Mandela Institute at the University of Fort Hare in East London, drawing an elephant for the book, uMshado weNkuku neNtlanzi.



Clever Pig - Josh Morgan was the Illustrator.



Madoda Ndlakuse, a story teller from Uitenhage and a literacy mentor for Nalibali, told the story of the marriage of the fish and the hen - one of three books written in isiXhosa last Saturday.



Design Masters student Amy Jane Harkess volunteered as a designer.

One day, 36 people, nine books

By SUE MACLENNAN
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Twelve hours to write, illustrate, edit and design a book?

That was the challenge 36 creative people embraced in Grahamstown last Saturday.

With the state-of-the-art brand-new National English Literary Museum as their base, nine teams comprising a writer, illustrator, editor and designer came up with nine ideas for children's stories, and set about turning them into books.

Book Dash (www.bookdash.org) is a non-profit organisation that creates, publishes, prints and gives away books for young children. Their vision is for every South African child to own 100 books by the age of five.

"In order to reach this goal, we host 12-hour book-making events across South Africa," programme director Julia Norrish explained in her invitation to Grahamstown's creative types.

"All the books created are open licensed which means anyone can print, download, read, adapt, translate and share them. The best part is, they are beautiful," said Norrish.

The books are then delivered to organisations such as Shine literacy, Word works and Nalibali, and are also available on their website, www.bookdash.org/see/books, where anyone can download them for free.

Illustrator Siyasanga Madyibi, from the Nelson Mandela Institute at the University of Fort Hare in East London was draw-

ing an elephant for the book, *uMshado weNkuku neNtlanzi*.

"Different, challenging," was as many words as she could spare, as she worked flat-out - first with pencil and paper, then pen tablet to complete her part of the 12-page children's story (plus cover and back page).

Also working on *uMshado* was Vuyisa Ngqawani, who is doing a B Tech in graphic design at NMMU. Like most of the participants creating the buzz in the NELM building on Saturday, it was his first Book Dash experience - "so far, so good".

Was he feeling the pressure? "Of course!"

Madoda Ndlakuse, a story teller from Uitenhage and a literacy mentor for Nalibali, told the story of the marriage of the

fish and the hen - one of three books written in isiXhosa last Saturday - a first according to Norrish, who said that up to now books had been translated into indigenous (and foreign) languages but had all started off in English.

"This is wonderful, especially for us as writers," Ndlakuse said.

"Finally it's a dream come true, working with a whole team to make something that's fresh, different and unique. I'm launching my own book in March and this is a great curtain-raiser.

"I like this because of its impact. It's not easy: I usually write much longer - with this writing, it's just the lean meat we're using," he said, referring to the much more compact format of children's books.

Of *uMshado weNkuku neNtlanzi*, he said, "This kind of deals with the subject of interracial marriages - but more in a way that will make children think."

For self-taught graphic designer Zandile "Maxet" Makina, from Queenstown, it was scary at first.

"It was not what I expected - but I got into it," she said. Her team, working on Lonwabo, included editor Linda Nelani and writer Mhlali Kumalo.

Grocott's Mail readers are familiar with Sarah Rose De Villiers whose work we published regularly this year under the epithet ARTicles.

Also a very capable writer, the fourth-year Writing and Editing student in the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rh-

des University was working at Book Dash as an illustrator.

"Quite breathless," she said of the high-pressure experience. "But it's a special thing to be surrounded by people who are giving their time and talent to grow South African literature for young minds."

Unathi Dyani works at Boomtown in Port Elizabeth. He was the illustrator for *uMbovane wala owonqenayo* and it was his first Book Dash.

"A bit on the stressful side because of the pressure... but it's cool. I like it," he said.

Another fourth-year Writing and Editing student from Rhodes was Carol Kagezi - one of the team that has been producing the fresh new Makana Sharp for the past few months.

Clever Pig was the book for which she was editor, Lee-Anne Knowles the designer and Josh Morgan the Illustrator.

Morgan lives near Zithulele in the former Transkei and is a teacher with the NGO, Axiom Education.

His first book dash was "amazing, really cool - being in the same room as so many creative people".

The only drawback was that you don't really get to watch what other creative people are doing, he said.

Apart from the East London and Port Elizabeth participants, there was even a writer from Cape Town who participated.

All participants signed on the basis of arranging their own transport and accommodation.

Competition was fierce to take part.

"Please note that making a full children's book in 12-hours is a challenge even for the best of creatives, so we only accept professionals or top-notch amateurs for these events," Norrish had warned future would-be participants.

After the 12-hour marathon, participants and family members who were still awake at the time gathered in NELM's state-of-the-art auditorium, where the creative teams stood in solidarity as their writers read out their stories.

Illustrations and text were projected on a big screen for an appreciative - and tired - audience.

Watch the video here: bit.ly/GrocDash